

Some Thoughts on Educating
the Young

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The main aim of a teacher, who is after all in loco parentis, is based on the responsibility for personal and social education of the young people who pass through their hands.

This aim is achieved in a greater or lesser degree by following a carefully laid down programme, produced by the authorities, with the teacher's own characteristic style and personality added. This inevitably influences the impressionable minds of the young people involved.

My main involvement in education has been in developing a close working relationship with many youngsters who were already labelled as 'failures'. Failures academically, failures socially, yet among these so-called failures were some of the most endearing young people I have ever met. They seemed to need and appreciate the extra individual attention given to them to help them respond to an educational system that did not seem to fit their personal needs. Certain elements of the teaching and learning of each pupil were on an individual basis and an element of diagnosis was made to cater for the needs required.

I think it is always important to question the value of what one is doing in education. To ask, "What have I done for this pupil?" or "What has this pupil done for himself?", "Is there any feeling of satisfaction in the achievement of a skill?"

I am sure one of the successful ways of 'getting through' to a seemingly unmotivated pupil is to find out what does motivate him, and somehow relate this to the subject being taught. To try to cultivate a relaxed, happy and productive atmosphere in the classroom is difficult but a goal to aim at always.

One of the basic hurdles to overcome is finding the happy medium between authority and familiarity, to engender respect and not ridicule. Children, especially teenagers, are probably the most critical of all creatures.

Sadly, I suppose, there will always be stony ground where the seed will not flourish, but one can always try, each success being treasured like a priceless jewel.

Some useful quotations:

"Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave."

Lord Brougham

"Education is the process of driving a set of prejudices down your throat."

Martin H. Fischer

"You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him to find it within himself."

Galileo

"Certainly the prolonged education indispensable to the progress of society is not natural to mankind."

from "My Early Life", W.S. Churchill

"The aim of education is the knowledge not of fact but of value."

W.R. Inge, Dean of St Paul's

"For every person wishing to teach there are thirty not wishing to be taught."

"1066 and All That", Sellars and Yeatman